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AUTHOR Hatch, J. Amos
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ABSTRACT

A systematic analysis was made of the communications of 5- and 6-year-old children in two kindergarten classrooms to discover whether children's face-to-face interactions with peers included "face work" components (rituals through which individuals manage impressions when it becomes difficult to maintain a social situation) and, if so, in what forms these components were expressed. Field note data were obtained from classrooms located in separate large urban school districts in the Southeastern United States. One classroom was located in a middle-income, predominately white neighborhood; the other was in a working class neighborhood gradually being integrated racially. In the first classroom, 7 of 21 children were black. In the second, 4 of 24 were black. Eight girls were included in the first classroom; 13 were included in the second. Both classes were organized so that children had opportunities to interact away from adult intervention. Analytical questions included the following: Do children participate in face-work as they interact with their peers? Do children use avoidance processes in defensive and protective ways? Do children participate in corrective interchanges to restore spoiled interactive order? and, Do children aggressively take advantage of face-work rules to "make points" in classroom interactions? The results indicated that children did take corrective or remedial action when the images they projected were threatened. They also practiced aggressive uses of face-work principles to improve their relative status among peers. (RH)

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Impression Management in Kindergarten Classrooms: An Analysis of Children's Face-Work in Peer Interactions

J. Amos Hatch

Duval County (FL) Public Schools

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Impression Management in Kindergarten Classrooms: An Analysis of Children's Face-Work in Peer Interactions

Erving Goffman (1963) has referred to children as "communication delinquents" because often they violate the rules of adult interaction. This study represents an initial exploration into the dynamics of that delinquency as evidenced in two kindergarten classrooms. It is believed that Goffman's orientation to the study of social phenomena has direct applications for the study of socialization processes in school and is particularly suited to the investigation of the contributions of peer interaction to that socialization.

This study applies a small portion of Goffman's rich theoretical perspective to the study of children's social behavior. The effort is exploratory in nature. The study is a systematic analysis of the communications of five- and six-year-old children in two kindergarten classrooms. The goals of the analysis were to discover if children's face-to-face interactions with peers included "face-work" components as described by Goffman (1967; 1971) and, if so, in what forms these components were expressed.

The rationale for conducting this study is based on observations by educational researchers (e.g., Katz, 1979; Lightfoot, 1978) and other social scientists (Denzin, 1977; Dreitzel, 1973) that childhood socialization processes are little understood and that the research into the unique "culture of childhood" has been neglected. This study seeks to enrich our understanding of social behavior in schoolrooms. In particular, it attempts to provide insight into the social perspectives of young children as they inter-

act among themselves in school contexts not directly supervised by adults. Applying Goffman's face-work perspective to children's interactions can improve understandings of the socialization of interpersonal rituals necessary for a lifetime of face-to-face encounters. For educational practitioners, understanding the dynamics of children's face-to-face behavior may serve to inform decision making concerning program planning, the creation of learning environments, and the design of educational activities.

Impression Management, Face-Work, and Remedial Interchanges

Goffman has provided a unique and revealing perspective on the study of social phenomena. In his work, the subject of interest is the behavior of individuals in interaction with others. He argues that explorations of the micro-order of everyday interpersonal communications contributed to understandings of the larger social order (1971; 1981). Goffman refers to his work as a "sociology of occasions." He explains: "Social organization is the central theme, but what is organized is the co-mingling of persons and the temporary interactional enterprises that can arise therefrom" (1967, p. 2).

In any contact which one individual has with another, impressions are given off and received. Of particular significance are face-to-face contacts as opposed to those mediated by such devices as the mails or telephones. Face-to-face interaction is special because, when an individual can be observed directly, a multitude of sources of expressed information are immediately available (Goffman, 1969). Individuals in face-to-face interactions seek to control the information expressed so that others will perceive them favorably. Goffman (1959) likens interactions to theater in which interactants stage performances as social actors. Individuals in interaction

practice the art of "impression management;" that is, they seek to present themselves in such a way as to create the impression that they understand and comply with the moral standards which organize all civil relations. On impression management, Goffman (1959) writes:

> In their capacity as performers, individuals will be concerned with maintaining the impression that they are living up to the many standards by which they and their products are judged. But quo performers, individuals are concerned not with the moral issue of realizing these standards, but with the amoral issue of engineering a convincing impression that these standards are being realized. (p. 251)

Individuals take a "line" of behavior in social interaction. Others define social situations based on these mutually accepted lines. Goffman (1967) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (p. 5). If one's line becomes suspect because of an embarrassing gaffe or faux pas, the ritualized communicative order is disturbed and one's face inevitably suffers. Goffman (1967) describes "face-work" rituals through which individuals manage impressions when it becomes difficult to maintain a social situation as it has been previously defined. Face-work rituals provide social moves through which individuals can defend faces which have been challenged or repair faces which have been exposed as faulty.

Since communicative equilibrium depends on mutually agreed upon definitions of each participants line, adults tend to conduct themselves during encounters so as to maintain their own faces and to protect the faces of others. In each interactive setting a person will have two points of view: "a defensive orientation toward saving his own face and a protective orientation toward saving the others' face" (Goffman, 1967, p. 14). Face-work occurs when individuals select lines of behavior based on estimations of the effects of

that behavior on their projected images and on the image others are projecting. Goffman describes the following basic kinds of face-work (adapted from Goffman, 1967, pp. 15-26).

> Avoidance Processes. The most basic way to prevent threats to face is to avoid contacts in which threats are likely to occur. Making a gracious withdrawal when threats are anticipated is a common example. Once involved in an encounter, keeping away from subjects and activities which might lead to embarrassing revelations is a defensive strategy. Modesty and hedging are used to protect a vulnerable line in case it is subsequently challenged. Protective avoidance moves include shows of respect, politeness, and discretion. Facts which may serve to embarrass claims made by others are left unstated or stated in such a way as to allow others to escape serious loss of face. Tactful overlooking is used when individuals pretend an offensive act has not occurred or acknowledge the act but pretend it is of little significance.
>
> Corrective Processes. When information is presented which is incompatible with the judgments of social worth that are being maintained, if it is of the magnitude that cannot be ignored, participants recognize it as a threat and initiate moves to correct for its effects. Ritual disequilibrium is felt and compels the actors to restore a satisfactory ritual state. Four classic moves comprise the corrective interchange used for re-establishing ritual order: (1) The challenge, by which responsibility is taken for calling attention to the misconduct; (2) The offering, whereby the offender is given a chance to correct for the offense; (3) The acceptance, through which participants signal their acceptance of the offering as a satisfactory means of re-establishing the interactive order; and (4) The thanks, through which the forgiven offers a sign of gratitude to his/her forgivers.
>
> Making Points - The Aggressive Use of Face-Work. When individuals use the built in expectations of face-work to promote their own status in relation to others,

> they are "making points." The general method is to introduce favorable facts about one's self and unfavorable information about others. In these interchanges, aggressors count on others to follow face-work rules. As a result of successfully making points, not only are facts introduced which are loaded in the aggressor's favor, but the aggressor's superior capacities for manipulating social interactions are demonstrated.

Goffman extends his treatment of face-work principles in an essay entitled "Remedial Interchanges" (1971). He describes "remedial work" which functions "to change the meaning that otherwise might be given an act, transforming what could be seen as an offensive act into what can be seen as acceptable" (1971, p. 109). Three devices by which these changes might be accomplished are offered (adapted from Goffman, 1971, pp. 109-118):

(1) Accounts include joinders through which individuals claim that acts they are accused of committing did not occur, claims that although offensive acts occurred they are not what they appeared and therefore harmless, pleas of innocence based on excusable ignorance of consequences, claims of reduced responsibility because of reduced competence, and pleas of indefensible ignorance;

(2) Apologies contain these elements: expression of embarrassment, clarification that one knows what was expected and accepts negative sanctions, repudiation of the act and vilification of self, espousal of the right way to act and avowal to do so, performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution; and

(3) Requests, which consist of asking those who might be offended for permission to engage in acts which could be considered violations of personal rights.

Accounts, apologies, and requests are tied to the corrective "offerings" outlined above. Under the topic "remedial interchanges," Goffman (1971)

describes a cycle of remediation which includes stages related to classic face-work moves. The cycle includes stages of remedy, relief, appreciation, and minimization. When an offense against ritual order is committed or anticipated, the moves of the remediation cycle serve to restore the disrupted equilibrium. Remedies are accounts, apologies, or requests through which offenders seek to mitigate the effects of unacceptable behavior. Relief moves are provided by the offended parties and function to signal offenders that their remedies are sufficient. Appreciation is offered to the victim by the offender. Minimization moves are signals that appreciation is appreciated and that ritual equilibrium is restored.

The questions guiding this study are directly related to face-work and remedial interchange concepts. These concepts will be discussed in more detail as findings related to children's social behavior are reported.

Questions, Data Sources, and Methods

The study applies the theoretical construct Goffman calls "face-work" to children's interactive behavior with peers. Goffman (1967) describes several face-work components and extends these concepts in later writings under the heading "remedial interchanges" (1971). The questions which guided the data analysis of the study were designed to explore children's expressions of many of these components. Analytic questions included the following:

> --Do children participate in face-work as they interact with their peers?; i.e., do they repeatedly and automatically ask themselves: "If I do or do not act in this way, will I or others lose face?" (Goffman, 1967, p. 36).
>
> --Do children use "avoidance processes" in defensive and protective ways? If so, what forms do these moves take?

--Do children participate in "corrective interchanges" to restore spoiled interactive order? Do they practice the four classic moves adults use to restore equilibrium once communicative order is threatened? Do they offer "accounts," extend "apologies," and make "requests;" and if so how do these compare in form to adult "remedial work?"

--Do children aggressively take advantage of face-work rules to "make points" in classroom interactions? If so, what form does their aggressive face-work take?

The basic data of the study are field note records made by the researcher in two naturalistic studies of child-to-child social behavior in two kindergarten classrooms. The classrooms were located in separate large urban school districts in the southeastern United States. One classroom was located in a "middle-income", predominately white neighborhood and served families in which the majority of parents were college educated, with many holding advanced degrees. The other school was located in a "working class," historically white neighborhood which was gradually being integrated as black families moved into the area. In the second school, over 75% of the students qualified for "free" or "reduced price" lunches and education levels of parents ranged from grade school to high school, with a few reporting some college. Both schools were subject to court orders mandating bussing to achieve racial balance. In the first classroom, seven of twenty-one children were black, while in the second, four of twenty-four were black. The numbers of girls in the first and second classrooms were eight and thirteen respectively. Both classes were organized so that children had opportunities to interact among themselves away from adult intervention as they played and completed school tasks.

The field note data used in the analysis represent over one hundred hours of classroom "passive participant observation" (Spradley, 1980) and include

records of hundreds of child-to-child interaction events. The data were not collected with Goffman's perspective in mind but were the original data for two independent studies of children's face-to-face social behavior in classroom settings. The field note records of children's classroom conversations were treated as raw data and were analyzed systematically according to techniques adapted from Spradley (1980) and Becker (1970). The principles of "analytic induction" as described by Denzin (1978) were invoked to maintain the integrity of the relationship between the research findings and the empirical reality of the classroom social scenes and to insure that analytic interpretations were borne out by the data.

Findings

Do children participate in face-work as they interact with their peers?

Analysis of the social interactions of children in the study revealed that children do take the anticipated effects of their actions on their own faces and the faces of others into account as they interact with peers. As will be evident throughout these findings, the structures of children's face-work practices are incomplete in relation to the forms adults utilize to maintain communicative order. Nonetheless, it seems clear that the kindergarten children of the study orchestrated their social behavior based on a taken-for-granted awareness that their behavior had consequences for the images they and their peers were projecting. Some field note excerpts will begin to demonstrate how children took particular lines in interaction and how they attached significance to maintaining those lines when challenged.

> Frank walks to a position between Les and Christine who are coloring with felt tip markers at the art table. Frank has been waiting for one of them to finish so he can have a turn with the markers.
> Frank: "Christine, you can't draw two pictures."

> Christine: "I'm not." Christine to Les: "Hey, did I draw two pictures?" Les looks at her drawing and the model drawing which the teacher has placed at the table and says: "Yes." Christine: "I did not." Frank to Christine: "You did that one" (pointing to the model). Christine: "No I didn't. I just said I was gonna copy it." Frank: "Oh." Frank walks away.

In this interaction event, Frank took the position that Christine must give up her seat at the art center because of the rule that only one picture can be drawn in a sitting. He contended that she had drawn two. Christine defended her right to stay by attacking Frank's incorrect assertion that she had drawn two pictures. Even after the corroboration she expected from Les did not materialize, she continued to press her case. Frank finally accepted her explanation for why there may be confusion and retired from the interchange.

Goffman (1971) writes: "All behavior of the individual, insofar as it is perceived by others, has an indicative function, made up of tacit promises and threats, confirming or disconfirming that he knows and keeps his place" (p. 344). In the excerpt above, the children involved were doing more than negotiating a space at the art table. When placed within the framework created by the analysis of hundreds of similar interaction events, this exchange serves as an example of children's engagement in an ongoing cycle of expressing and defending their status as competent social actors. Their interaction moves indicated to their peers that they were willing to aggressively defend their rights, that they were able to use a variety of techniques, including the testimony of others and logical argument, to make their cases, and that they understood the value of acceptance and withdrawal. Both Christine and Frank came away with faces intact. They demonstrated that they were able to maintain lines of behavior and confirm their claims to the

status associated with those lines. In the excerpt which follows, a child loses face as the result of taking a line which he was ultimately unable to maintain.

> Sandra to Benjamin: "Why did you use all those colors?" (They are coloring animal pictures.) Benjamin: "Shuddup Sandra-head." Sandra: "Sandra-head?" Benjamin: "You don't even know your colors." Sandra: "Uh-huh, look." She points to each crayon in her box and names its color correctly. Benjamin, holding up a purple crayon, says: "Uh-un, this is reddish...(pause)." Sandra: "That's purple." Benjamin: "Uh-un, you don't even know your colors." Sandra: "Yes I do, watch me." She goes through them correctly again. Benjamin: "This isn't purple, it's red." Rod: "That's not red. Dee Dee is that red?" Dee Dee: "No." Benjamin: "It's purple. I said it was purple."

Benjamin selected a very public setting in which to attempt an attack on Sandra's knowledge of color concepts. When she demonstrated that his claims against her were unfounded, he attempted to fabricate evidence only to have his efforts backfire. When other children who had witnessed his attempt validated his gaffe, he was left with nothing but an empty denial that his original line had ever been taken. Benjamin attempted to introduce information which would discredit Sandra while creating an image of himself as one adept at manipulating social exchanges to his advantage. The effect of this spoiled attempt was to allow Sandra to maintain her status as one who knows her colors and one who can answer a challenge, while Benjamin lost credibility and came off as an inept social actor.

The excerpts above demonstrate that children establish, challenge, and defend lines of behavior to which personal images or faces are connected. In the hundreds of interaction events analyzed in this study, it was clear that children understood that their reputations and the reputations of their peers were subject to redefinition in every interactive encounter. As the

specific components of Goffman's face-work construct are explored below, field note excerpts will be presented. Each of those will offer an additional example in support of the finding that children in this study participated in face-work as they interacted with their peers.

Do children use avoidance processes in defensive and protective ways?

Children in the study used avoidance processes which were similar in form to those described by Goffman (1967, pp. 15-18). In order to maintain faces they were projecting, children exercised such defensive moves as avoiding situations in which threats were anticipated, changing the subject or withdrawing when confronted with face threats, waiting for others to establish lines of action prior to committing to lines of their own, and using such devices as hedging, modesty, and unseriousness to cover their lines in anticipation of possible challenges. Children also demonstrated the use of protective avoidance moves in interactions with peers. Protective processes were used less often and seemed more rudimentary in form when compared to children's defensive moves. Children were observed, however, using discretion in an effort to protect peers from loss of face. They demonstrated a capacity to leave unstated facts which might embarrass others, to assist others in generating explanations for apparent out-of-face behaviors, and to exercise tactful blindness, pretending offensive acts had not occurred or pretending acknowledged acts were not serious blunders. Field note data will be utilized as the forms of children's avoidance processes are described.

The following excerpt is an example of the use of withdrawal to avoid situational developments which could cause loss of face.

> Louis, Jeff, and Christine are playing BINGO. Christine is the caller (the one turning the symbol cards over), and the two boys each have a bingo card. The cards have a variety

> of Christmas symbols to be matched. Louis calls: "Bingo" and moves around the table to a position next to Christine. Christine shows no intention of leaving caller position. Louis: "I'm the caller. The one that wins is the caller." After a pause, Christine places the turning cards on the table and leaves the game center without speaking.

In addition to physically leaving the scene of possibly threatening interactions, children often turned their backs on potential challengers, began conversations with others, or began singing or chanting. Although these behaviors would be unacceptable in adult interaction, children were virtually never challenged for using them. They functioned to provide children with escapes from face-threatening situations.

Children also used more sophisticated, or at least more adult-like, avoidance procedures. The first excerpt below is an example of changing the subject in anticipation of the development of an uncomfortable situation. In the second excerpt, one child protects herself from the loss of face associated with rejection by framing her appeal for a play partner in the form of a statement.

> Sarah leaning across the table to Roger: "I stlll love you." Roger shifts in his seat, does not look up from his work. Sarah leans still closer: "I wanna trick you." Roger looks up. Sarah whispers: "I love you Roger." Roger pulls back, makes a gun with his index finger, says" "We 'visible army men." He makes the sound of gunfire. Sarah returns fire. They duck and dodge and shoot.

> At choice time, Elizabeth goes to the toy record player while Teresa selects "Like and Different" cards. Teresa to Elizabeth: "I need somebody to play with me too. Only two people spoze to play." Elizabeth says nothing, pushes aside the record player, and joins Teresa.

Other ways of covering potentially vulnerable lines were used by children in the classrooms observed. Children used baby talk or silly behavior when

taking chances with peers. These covers allowed children to exclaim, "I was just joking" if their overtures or requests were met with disapproval. Children also used what Goffman (1967) calls "negative-attribute etiquette" to cover requests for attention or public performances. Statements like: "It might not be good, but..." or "It probably might come out wrong" provided evidence of sufficient modesty to deter harsh criticism. Finally, children had learned to hedge statements which might be challenged. In much the same manner as adults, they qualified many of their assertions with phrases such as: "I'm not sure, but..." and "I think" and frequently followed declarations with hedging interrogatives; e.g., "We cut this on the back, right?"

Protective avoidance strategies used by children demonstrated their capacities to exercise discretion and tact in an effort to avoid or minimize the embarrassment of peers. The following interaction documents one child's attempt to avoid confronting another with an embarrassing evaluation. The event is an example of how children worked together using defensive and protective strategies to minimize face threats.

> Children are making valentines at the independent activity table. Amy to Elizabeth: "I'm finished, isn't it pretty?" Amy holds up her work. Elizabeth starts to deliver an enthusiastic "Ye..." but stops as she looks at Amy's valentine [which is a mess]. Elizabeth looks uncomfortable. Amy studies Elizabeth's expression and says: "It's not so good, huh?" Elizabeth wrinkles her nose, avoids eye contact with Amy and goes back to work.

Children assisted others in escaping from embarrassing situations by going along with their face covering moves, however weak, and by tactfully overlooking events that might threaten the lines others were projecting. In the first excerpt below, one child accepts an artificial laugh as another child's escape move after an embarrassing moment. The first child signals

his acceptance by echoing the hollow laugh. In the second, one child releases her workmate from possible embarrassment by overlooking her peer's struggle to demonstrate competence.

> Roger to Don: "You wanna know my phone number?" Don signals 'yes' by looking up from his work and establishing eye contact with Roger. Roger: "5-4-3-2-1." Don: "Wanna know mine? 6-5-8 thirty-five twenty Lemon Street. [Don realizes he has gotten it wrong and that Roger knows it.] After an uncomfortable pause, Don: "I got a new address and phone number." Roger: "What is it?" Don turns his face away from Roger's and forces a hollow sounding laugh: "Ha, ha, ha." Roger echos: "Ha, ha, ha." The subject is dropped.
>
> Children are working on a cut 'n paste phonics sheet. Cheryl: "Louise, where does this (piece) go?" Louise takes the piece and tries several different places on Cheryl's paper: "It goes... I think it goes..." [Louise seems very nervous when she can't place the piece.] Cheryl makes no reference to Louise's trouble, picks up an easier piece, and says: "Here, this goes here."

Children's acts of defensive avoidance were observed much more often than acts of protection. Even though they did demonstrate the capacity to exercise discretion and tact when the faces of others were subject to compromise, as will be seen in the next section, children were more likely to call attention to the out-of-face behaviors of others than discretely to overlook them.

Do children participate in corrective interchanges to restore spoiled interactive order?

It was clear in analyzing children's interactions that they invested face in their lines of behavior with peers and that they used avoidance processes to maintain the images they and their peers projected. In addition, analysis revealed that when information which contradicted established lines was introduced, feelings of uneasiness or "ritual disequilibrium" were evident. In these ways, children's face-work paralleled impression management techniques used in adult interaction.

Sometimes children confronted events which were expressively incompatible with established judgments of social worth. When these events were too serious to be overlooked, children worked together to restore interactive order. However, they were not observed using the full cycle of classic moves Goffman (1967) describes as "corrective processes."

Challenges, offerings, acceptance, and thanks moves comprise the corrective ritual as presented by Goffman (1967). Children in the study challenged their peers consistently and in forms very much like adult challenges. They demonstrated well developed capacities for generating offerings. They used accounts, apologies, and requests as remedies when attempting to remediate potentially offensive acts (see Goffman, 1971). After challenges and offerings, however, the similarities to adult corrective processes stop. In fact, for children, the corrective process seemed to end following the presentation of a satisfactory offering. If non-response equals acceptance for children, then acceptance moves may have been "understood," but virtually no overt acceptance moves were observed. That being the case, there were naturally no records of thanks moves.

Field note data will serve to illustrate challenges and offerings utilized by children in their "abbreviated" corrective interchanges. Examples of accounts, apologies, and requests will be provided.

Goffman (1967) describes a ritualized process through which adults, when confronted with an event which exposes an individual as being out-of-face, "ratify it as a threat that deserves direct official attention - and proceed to try to correct for its effects" (p. 19). The challenge is a move through which participants take responsibility for calling attention to misconduct. The challenge signals offenders that reparations must be made if previously projected images are to be restored. Children in the study utilized challenging

behaviors which shared form and function with adult challenges. The following interchange includes three examples of children's challenges. In the first challenge, several children agreed that Sarah had been cruel to Louise. In the second, Louise challenged Roger's shift from being her supporter to one who would tease her ("That aint nice.") Finally, Sue pointed out a minor semantic slip which Roger easily repaired.

> Sarah throws a pencil at Louise, hitting her across the fingers. Louise gets teary and finally breaks into soft crying. She surveys each face (including mine) to be sure each one sees she's hurt. Jerome sees her rippled lower lip and asks: "What's wrong with you?" Louise: "Sarah threw a pencil and hit these two fingers." Louise extends her fingers toward Jerome. Jerome: "I'ma tell. She hit her bad." Roger, in soft voice: "Don't cry Louise." Sue: "It don't help to cry. It don't help to cry, do it Roger?" Sarah watches all this with arms folded and lower lip and chin thrust forward. Louise goes from child to child at table 2 to show the physical evidence of her injury. James: "Oh, she hurt bad." Roger: "Sarah, look what you did." Louise goes to Sarah: "See, look what you did." Sarah looks, then turns away. Louise takes her seat, still nursing her fingers. After twenty second pause, Roger to Louise: "What's your father's name?" Louise: "Tommy." Roger in sarcastic, mocking tone: "Tommy? Tommy-Bommy-Dommy." Louise, in hurt voice: "That aint nice." One minute later, Roger to Louise: "Want me to be your girlfriend?" Sue: "Girlfriend?" Roger fixes it: "You want me to be your boyfriend?"

Offerings are moves whereby the offender is given the opportunity to correct for the offense and re-establish expressive order (Goffman, 1967). Goffman (1971) particularizes kinds of offerings in his discussion of remedies. He describes accounts, apologies, and requests as remedial moves undertaken to "transform what could be seen as offensive into what can be seen as acceptable" (1971, p. 109). Children demonstrated a surprising

facility for generating remedies. In the sections below, examples of children's remedies will be presented and related to Goffman's (1971) analysis of adult remedial work.

Accounts

One way adults respond to accusations of misconduct is to argue that the acts they are accused of committing did not in fact occur. Another is to grant the occurrence of the act but to deny any connection or responsibility. Children used both of these response patterns with peers. Examples follow.

> Eddy to Holly: "Oh-oh, you did yours wrong." She covers her bird coloring with her arms, says: "Uh-un." Eddy: "Yeah, you did. You colored it wrong." Phillip: "Yeah, it's wrong." Holly looks uncomfortable, shifts in her seat [looking for a way out]. She turns her back on Eddy and Phillip and says to Cheryl: "See how short my fingernail is."

> Louise to Sarah: "You moved my chair over there" (to the other side of the table). Sarah: "Louise, I did not." Louise looks at the other children at the table. Benjamin: "I didn't do it." Gina: "I think I know who it is." Benjamin: "Louise put it over there to get Sarah in trouble." Sarah, with finality in her voice: "I didn't put it over there" (thrusting her chin forward).

Adults sometimes account for misdeeds by arguing that their actual behavior was radically different from what it appeared to be. They attempt to mitigate responsibility by redefining the situation so that their behavior is interpreted in a new, more favorable light. Examples from children's interactions offer samples of their uses of these strategies.

> George sees Tess having trouble finding the workbook page as directed by the teacher. He tries to point out the page to her. Tess: "I wasn't through yet. I don't need your help."

> Roger sings: "Do-do face, do-do face." Louise puts on a look like she's really hurt by this

> reference to her. Roger sees her reaction: "Louise, I'm not calling you that, I'm calling Sarah that. Do-do face, do-do face" (to Sarah).

Adults sometimes agree that out-of-face acts occurred and that they performed the acts, but argue that they were excusably unforeseeing, that they were victims of involuntary motor acts or unavoidable circumstances, or that they were acting in an unserious manner (and would certainly have stopped had they known harm would result). Children utilized claims from this group to attempt to account for behaviors challenged by peers.

> In the cafeteria, Amy raises her hand to get help. Sandra: "You want me to open it?" (her milk carton). Amy hands it to Sandra. Sandra struggles with the carton turning it over on the table. Amy sends a disgusted look at Sandra. Sandra: "I didn't mean to. I didn't mean to."
>
> Tess falls as she leaves table 5, yells: "George!" George: "I can't ever get my legs out (from under the chair)."
>
> Gina: "Eddy can't hear." Holly, in support of Eddy: "We're spoze to be nice to all people - black people, robbers." (Eddy is black.)
> Gina: "You're not spoze to be nice to the devil."
> Holly: "Uh-un, you have to love everyone."
> Eddy: "When you get older, you gonna die if you don't love the devil." Gina: "I know." Eddy: "Uh-un, you said you didn't love the devil."
> Gina: "I know, I was just foolin'."

Adults claim reduced responsibility because of reduced competence. They claim mitigation based on sleepiness, passion, subordination to the will of others, youthfulness, mental deficiency, and so forth. The argument is that they are guilty of being incompetent, not of the specific deed resulting therefrom. As in the following excerpts, children claimed "goofiness" and the influence of another to mitigate responsibility for misdeeds.

> Sarah sings Jingle Bells over and over. Sue joins in for two choruses. Bob sings a little in baby talk: "Tinkle dells." Roger: "Tinkle dells?" Bob giggles: "I'm goofy."

> The class plays a game in which they are assigned numbers to remember. Tess to Rod, after he has run with the wrong group: "You're a three" [in an 'I caught you' tone]. Rod: "Uh-un, I was with her and she just ran" (pointing to Gina).

The final account strategy is the least effective used by adults. They claim to be responsible and competent but indefensibly ignorant of the consequences of their actions. Sarah makes such a claim in the following excerpt.

> Sarah sneaks the stethoscope to the work table. As she is playing with it, she pulls the end-piece off. Terry: "Ooh, your in trouble." Sarah: "I just pulled it. I didn't know it would break."

Apologies

Goffman (1971) describes a second domain of remedies designated as apologies. He defines several elements which comprise apologies in their fullest form:

> The apology has several elements: expression of embarrassment and chagrin; clarification that one knows what conduct had been expected and sympathizes with the application of negative sanction; verbal rejection, repudiation, and disavowal of the wrong way of behaving along with vilification of the self that so behaved; espousal of the right way and an avowal hence-forth to pursue that course; performance of penance and the volunteering of restitution (p. 113).

In this study, children demonstrated the use of all of the elements of adult apologies. Although no instances were recorded in which more than three such elements were present in a single interchange, all of the elements Goffman describes were observed as children's interactions were analyzed. Several interaction events which contain elements Goffman includes under

apologies are presented below.

> George falls over James as he moves to put his work into his cubbyhole. George: "Sorry 'bout that man."
>
> During the "moment of silence" (observed each morning). Nadine to Robin: "I'm tellin'. You playin'." Robin has a six-inch metal strip which he has been brandishing like a sword. Robin, as he stuffs the strip into his front pocket and thrusts his hips forward (so Nadine can see): "I'll put it away, see."
>
> Sue: "Bob, get to work, you're makin' me mad." Bob: "Yeah, I'm makin' me mad too."
>
> Roger watches Jerome struggle with cutting activity: "Oh Jerome, you gotta stay on the lines." Jerome: "Oh shuddup! Don't tell me what to do Mr. Roger." Then, after about thirty seconds, Jerome: "I'm gonna stay on the line next time."
>
> Sarah to Roger, trying to get him to sit next to her and away from Bob: "Move over here. Sit next to me." Roger moves but sees the disappointment in Bob's face. Roger signals Bob to move to the empty seat on his other side (opposite Sarah). Sarah: "Don't call him over." Roger to Bob: "Here, you can sit next to me too." Bob moves.
>
> Don and Robin are hitting and bumping each other (as usual). Robin slugs Don in the stomach and apparently knocks the wind out. Don chokes up and almost cries. Robin puts his arm around Don: "I'm sorry. You want me to kiss it better?" He kisses his friend on the front of his shirt.

Requests

The final remedy type Goffman describes are requests. Requests differ from other remedies in that they are advanced prior to the execution of an act which may be interpreted as offensive. The potential offenders anticipate that their behavior, if unchallenged, may cause the persons offended to lose face. Requests consist of "asking license of a potentially offended

person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his rights" (Goffman, 1971, p. 114). Requests are tools whereby permission is sought in advance for intrusions on the personal territory of others. Examples in adult interaction include: "Can I ask you a favor?" or "Are you using that right now?" Goffman (1971) writes: "When a violation is invited by he who ordinarily would be its victim, it ceases to be a violation" (p. 114). Requests, then, are moves whereby such invitations are solicited. Children demonstrated their awareness that peers had faces which were subject to loss when violations of personal territory were not challenged. They used requests as means for obtaining permission to intrude on the "territories of the self" claimed by their peers. Examples are offered.

> George comes out of the restroom fumbling with his belt. Robin, referring to belt: "Can I wear that?" George does not respond. Robin repeats: "Can I wear that?" George turns away, does not respond.
>
> Phillip to Cheryl: "Can I use your brown?" Cheryl: "No (she had just picked it up). After ten seconds, Cheryl: "I'm already usin' it."
>
> Amy returns to table 2 with a sponge and a rag. She passes the sponge to Gina: "You wanna wipe with that?" Gina starts wiping.

Summary of Children's Corrective/Remedial Work

Children in this study did take corrective or remedial action when images being projected were threatened. Children took responsibility for challenging the out-of-countenance behavior of their peers and showed a well developed capacity for generating offerings or remedies when challenged. Evidence was not found, however, for acceptance or thanks moves which Goffman (1967) describes under correctives; or for relief, appreciation, or minimization moves described under remedial work (1971). It might be argued that acceptance

or relief moves were tacitly understood in interactional contexts, but recognizable overt behaviors in those areas were not found.

Do children aggressively take advantage of face-work rules to make points in classroom interaction?

Children in the two classrooms observed in this study practiced aggressive uses of face-work principles to improve their relative status among their peers. As their interactions were analyzed, it was evident that making points in kindergarten looked very much like making points in graduate school, at cocktail parties, or in other adult contexts.

Goffman points out that the assumptions at the core of face-work (e.g., that interacting individuals attempt to preserve everyone's line from inexcusable contradiction) open up the possibility that threats will be willfully introduced for what may be gained by them. Goffman (1967) describes making points as follows:

> The general method is for the person to introduce favorable facts about himself and unfavorable facts about others in such a way that the only reply the others will be able to think up will be one that terminates the interchange in a grumble, a meager excuse, a face-saving I-can-take-a-joke laugh, or an empty stereotyped comeback of the 'Oh yeah?' or 'That's what you think' variety (p. 24-25).

Children were frequently observed pointing out the mistakes, weaknesses, or inadequacies of others and, in doing so, promoting their own capacities as superior social actors. Several examples of aggressive face-work are included in the following excerpts.

> During choice time, Louis moves to a position on the rug where materials have apparently been left out after children have moved to another activity. Louis, in loud voice: "Whoever left their stuff out, clean it up." He gets no response so, in a louder voice, he calls: "All you girls and boys,

I wanna tell you something!" The room goes quiet and everyone looks his way. Louis: "Somebody left out their toys and they're always doing it." Teacher to no one in particular: "We all do it."

Shirley and Patty are whispering together as they sit on the rug cutting paper scraps during choice time. The new girl walks to a position near Shirley and Patty. Shirley: "Go find something else to do. You're not allowed to watch us." Patty repeats: "You're not allowed to watch us." New girl walks away.

Teacher has instructed children to take three strips of paper from the box being passed through the class. Eddy sees Phillip take only two strips, says: "You're spoze to have three of 'em." Phillip: "Two." Eddy: "You don't know what you're talkin' 'bout. Holly, tell this dumbhead he's spoze to have three."

Amy has begun passing out pencils while Teacher is still giving instructions. Cheryl [in a voice meant for more than just Amy]: "Hey, put those pencils back." Teacher stops and makes Amy sit down.

As Rod returns to his seat after sharing his puzzle at show and tell, Elizabeth: "Rod always has to act like a gentleman." Rod: "What?" [He heard but doesn't know what she means.] Elizabeth: "Rod always has to act like a gentleman, ah-ah-ah." As she says this, Elizabeth half-closes her eyes, tilts her head in a refined attitude, holds up her wrist and bends it in an aristocratic gesture on each 'ah.' Rod looks down and does not respond.

Gina and Cheryl are admiring themselves and each other in the mirror. Tess comes up, says to Gina: "You wore that (red playsuit) yesterday." Gina: "My mommy wants me to." Tess: "Did you want to?" Gina [looking uncomfortable]: "Uh-huh." Tess: "You wore the same socks too. And the same shoes." Gina (trying to change subject): "I don't have shoes like yours." Tess: "You wore the same socks and the same shoes yesterday." Gina slides away to her seat.

As these interactions demonstrate, children in the study had the social knowledge and skill necessary to aggressively turn face-work expectations to

their advantage. As with adults, children utilized making points behaviors with an audience in mind. Since the goal of such behaviors was to improve relative status, the more children witnessed a successful use of aggressive face-work, the more advantage was gained.

Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

This exploratory analysis of interactions in two kindergarten classrooms provides evidence that the young children in the study had faces to lose. That is, they had come to understand that their social reputations and those of their peers were subject to redefinition in each interactive encounter. They selected lines of behavior in peer interactions based on their perceptions of how those lines would affect lines previously established by themselves and by interaction partners. They demonstrated an awareness of the forms and functions of impression management via face-work.

Children had learned to feel a sense of disequilibrium when they or peers were confronted with information which caused established lines to become suspect. They used the beginnings of interaction rituals to restore communicative order when disequilibrium was introduced. They used avoidance processes to save their own faces or the faces of peers when threats were anticipated. They used modesty, hedging behavior, and unseriousness to cover lines from possible attack. In order to defend their own faces from possible challenge they withdrew strategically, changed the subject, and allowed others to establish expectations prior to taking lines of their own. In efforts to protect peers from embarrassment children demonstrated tact, discretion, and polite inattention.

Children challenged peers freely when out-of-countenance behavior was suspected. Although discretion and tact were observed, it was likely that

public attention would be brought to bear on those found to be asserting a line to which they had false claims. When challenged, children demonstrated a well developed repertoire of responses designed to reject, deflect, or mitigate the effects of peer challenges. They effectively offered excuses or accounts, extended apologies, and made requests in response to challenges or in anticipation of offending peers.

Children demonstrated a capacity for aggressively making points in peer interactions by introducing information which cast others in an unfavorable light. Children pointed out the mistakes, weaknesses, and inadequacies of others and did so in such a way as to promote their own superior status.

Three general conclusions seem justified in light of these initial findings: (1) Children had by the second semester of their public school careers developed a complex array of social knowledge and skills; (2) The development of children's knowledge of the norms, rules, and expectations which give order to adult face-to-face interactions was incomplete; and (3) Children were more likely to be aggressive than tactful in their face-work with peers.

That social development is incomplete and yet substantial by age five or six is not surprising (see Corsaro, 1979; Ervin-Tripp, 1982; Genishi and Di Paulo, 1982). Children's incomplete development, when framed within the perspective of face-work principles, exhibits interesting characteristics. In recent writings, Goffman (1981) reiterates face-work principles as follows:

> 1. An act is taken to carry implications regarding the character of the actor and his evaluation of his listeners, as well as reflecting on the relationship between him and them.
>
> 2. Potentially offensive acts can be remedied by the actor through accounts and apologies, but this remedial work must appear to be accepted as sufficient by the potentially offended party before

the work can properly be terminated.

3. Offended parties are generally obliged to induce a remedy if none is otherwise forthcoming or in some other way show that an unacceptable state of affairs has been created, else, in addition to what has been conveyed about them, they can be seen as submissive regarding others' lapses in maintaining the ritual code (p. 21).

The third principle above may not be fully developed in young children. That is, they may not have learned that their own faces are at stake when offenders are not forced to take ritual responsibility for offensive acts. Children demonstrated that the out-of-line behavior of offending others could and should be challenged. They were very aggressive in their use of challenges and were adept at making points by revealing for public inspection the inadequacies of peers. However, when challenges were met with weak accounts or apologies or with complete avoidance by those challenged, challengers typically did not press the offenders for more satisfactory remedies. In fact, overt signs of acceptance were not important following children's offerings. This suggests that neither offenders nor those offended had developed the adult sense that, in order not to be perceived as "submissive," offended parties must press offenders to provide remedies sufficient to restore interactive order.

On the aggressive character of children's interactions, Goffman (1981) describes children as the "mature practitioners" of open blaming and bickering. Indeed, in this study, children were quick to press their own advantage with accusations, threats, and taunts. Those were often met with counters in kind. Goffman (1967) suggests that such bickering among children may be related to the development of poise under fire. He generalizes: "It is no wonder that trial by taunting is a test that every young person passes through

until he develops a capacity to maintain composure" (Goffman, 1967, p. 104). Adults, then, have learned to exercise more tactful means for making points and have developed norms and expectations which demand that careful attention be given to the remedies offered by potential offenders. Children are more aggressive than tactful and have not developed a complete sense of responsibility for calling the out-of-face behavior of peers into account.

This study has implications for educational practitioners and for social researchers interested in studying social processes in school settings. Social competence is learned through experiences in a vast array of contexts. Children's experiences in school rooms make an important contribution to the socialization of that competence. Children are not passive recipients of adult culture, but actively involved in the interactive processes of socialization at all levels (Drietzel, 1973). Interactions with peers may provide children with opportunities for active social learning which are not available to them in interactive encounters with adults (Black, 1979; Ross, 1983). These socialization processes and the importance of peer contributions to them are not well understood by social scientists or educational practitioners.

This study and others like it can provide information which can improve the understandings of teachers and other educators responsible for designing and implementing educational programs. For instance, it may be that programs for young children should allow more school time for children to interact without intrusive adult supervision.

Educational researchers and other social scientists interested in social processes in school may find this study useful. The application of Goffman's perspective to the study of children's social behavior in school may serve to enrich understandings of the complex processes of socialization. Face-work principles represent a tiny fraction of Goffman's robust theoretical contri-

bution. This study, while admittedly exploratory, offers some evidence for the efficacy of applying the sociology of Erving Goffman to the study of social interaction in school settings.

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